COMMANDERS DIGEST

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What's Behind the Mutual Balanced Force Talks?

MBFR Talks: Viability & Cohesion

The United States delegation to the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks departed Washington in mid-September following a brief summer recess and period of consultation ended. Despite a few speculative reports that the talks have been stalled, both sides have indicated that they are satisfied with the progress and pace of the negotiations. The U.S. delegation has charactetized the tone of the meetings as businesslike, with both East and West demonstrating a desire to reach accord.

The MBRF talks are an outstanding example of the viability and cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations have presented a common position in the talks and consulted closely in the negotiating process.

The U.S. delegation has declined to speculate when an agreement might be announced. In the end, however, an MBFR accord must be seen in a larger context for Europe and international relations generally.

In Europe, MBFR comes during a period of unprecedented negotiations that has already seen progress on the status of Berlin, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Eastern dialogues of the Federal Republic of Germany.

On a more global scale, negotiations have brought initial agreements in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The United States and the Soviet Union seek further agreement on nuclear arms limitations in Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and the multinational Law of the Sea conference in Caracas, Venezuela.

Thus, MBFR cannot be viewed in isolation as a mere redefinition of the balance in Europe, rather it is part of an overall mutual confidence-building process. Indeed, it is physical evidence of movement from "an era of confrontation to an era of negotiations" and, hopefully, to "a generation of peace."

By **James R. Schlesinger,** Secretary of Defense
From the FY 1975 Annual Defense Department Report

While many agree with the need and importance of conventional forces, there is controversy over the balance of military forces between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. It has sometimes been suggested that NATO does not have, and cannot afford to acquire, a conventional option which does more than serve as a tripwire for nuclear war. I disagree. Our analysis suggests that NATO has the essential ingredients for such a balance. If the NATO countries do not falter in their defense programs, and if we can concert our defense efforts more effectively, there is no reason why NATO should not be able to achieve and sustain an adequate defense posture for the long haul.

NATO has fielded a large military force of high quality. It is a force of considerable strength. It continues to improve. In many respects it is not the equal of the Warsaw Pact force opposing it—for instance, in maneuver divisions and tanks. NATO's main reinforcements, those from the United States, are not so close as those of the Soviet Union. But NATO has some strengths of its own, such as tactical air forces, and the Warsaw Pact has some weaknesses and vulnerabilities, such as logistics and the uncertain reliability of some Pact members.

NATO and Warsaw Pact Forces

As a consequence, there is an approximate balance between the immediately available forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact in the Center Region. The Pact has an advantage over NATO in the number of men in ground forces. The Pact also has a large numerical superiority in tanks (about 15,500 to 6,000 for NATO). But NATO possesses important quantitative or qualitative advantages in tank destroyers, antitank weapons, trucks, logistic support, and—most important of all—modern fighter aircraft.

The arithmetic of the situation demonstrates the Pact has some quantitative advantages. Unilateral withdrawals of United States ground and tactical air forces from Europe, despite the continued massive Soviet presence, could begin to tilt what has proven to be a relatively stable balance dangerously in favor of the Warsaw Pact.

In these circumstances, I cannot in good conscience recommend that we take out units short of an agreement with the Pact on mutual and balanced force reductions. Whatever their other roles—and they are important—the United States Forces in Europe, in their current size and composition, perform a critical military function, and it is much more than to serve as part of a tripwire. They are sized to help maintain a stalwart conventional defense against an attack by the Pact after little warning, and I believe that mission continues to be essential despite the steps we have taken toward detente.

To stress the importance of the United States contribution to the defense of Western Europe, and to the maintenance of a conventional balance of deployed power between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, is not to argue that we can be complacent about the situation in the Center Region as it now exists. The Soviets continue to add to and improve their capabilities there. And, as I have stressed to our allies in NATO, the relative weight of the European contribution to the common defense needs to increase still further.

This realistic and positive assessment of NATO's conventional defense capabilities does not mean the existing correlation of forces between NATO and the Warsaw Pact is satisfactory for our security. While NATO does have substantial conventional defense capabilities—and it is important that the Soviet Union realizes this—there remain objective disparities, and any Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction agreement must address these disparities if it is to enhance stability.

STANLEY R. RESOR

Stanley R. Resor was born in New York City on December 5, 1917. He is a graduate of Groton School, Yale University, and the Yale Law School. He majored in government at Yale, where he received a B.A. degree in 1939 along with a commission as a second lieutenant in the Field Artillery Reserve.

During World War II, Resor interrupted his studies at the Yale Law School to serve with the Army from February 1942 to January 1946.

Returning to the United States in October 1945, Resor returned to the Yale Law School and received his Bachelor of Law Degree in June 1946.

In April 1965, Resor assumed the office of the Under Secretary of the Army. He was sworn into office as Secretary of the Army on July 7, 1965, serving until June 30, 1971. He became Representative of the United States of America for Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions negotiations on October 1, 1973.

MBFR *Aims a*

By STANLEY R. RESOR, Ambassador to MBFR

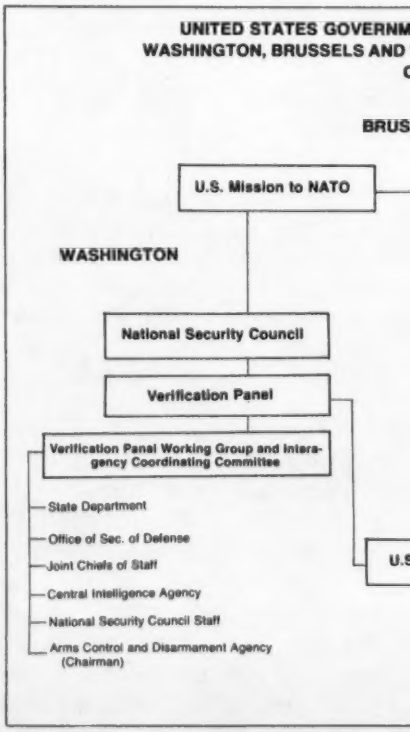
The MBFR negotiations began on October 30 of last year. In preliminary consultations during the spring of 1973, we agreed on participation. The 19 participants—12 on the NATO side and seven on the Warsaw Pact side—are divided into two categories. The so-called direct participants are those who may sign actual agreements: on the Western side they are Belgium, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, and on the Eastern side they are Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, and the Soviet Union. All these countries have forces or territory in Central Europe. The so-called special participants are Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway and Turkey on the Western side, and Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary on the Eastern side. Hungary is in a somewhat special category, in that the Western side has reserved the right to raise the question of how and to what extent Hungary will be included in future decisions, agreements or measures.

We have been actively negotiating on MBFR for about nine months now, and we believe the negotiations are going well, given their unprecedented character and complexity. The issues involved go to the heart of the security interests of each of the participants, and there are 19 of them. Rapid progress was not expected, and there is a premium on patience. But if you took an individual poll of all the 19 heads of delegation in Vienna, I do not believe that you would find any on of them who does not expect the negotiations to lead to an agreemer on force reductions. In our view, bo sides are demonstrating a serious interest in coming to an agreemen

The East and West are discussir very specific proposals in Vienna. The merits of these proposals, however, should be seen against th background of the military situatio in Central Europe with which the negotiations deal.

Military Situation

The two sides agreed during the preliminary consultations that the



at Security & Stability

aim of the Vienna negotiations should be to enhance security and stability in Europe, by achieving a more stable military balance at lower levels of forces with undiminished security for all participants.

What are the main elements of instability in the present military situation in Central Europe? We see three such elements:

The East has more men in ground forces than the West;

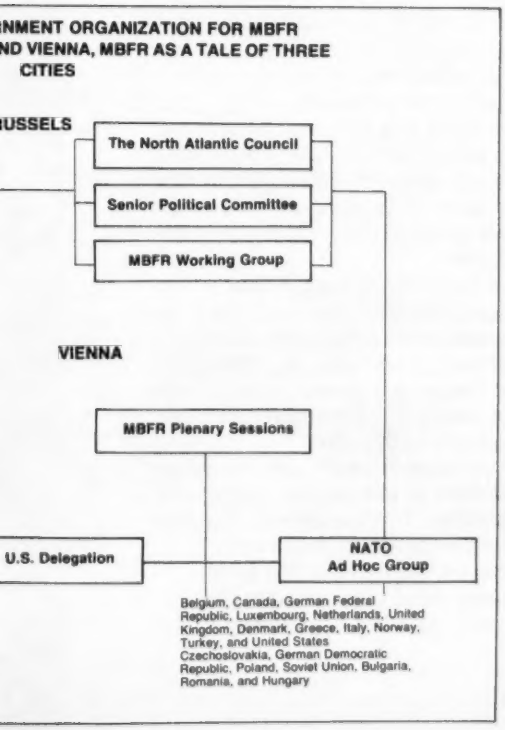
It has an advantage of two-and-a-half to one in tanks; and

It has a major geographical advantage since the United States is eight times as far from Central Europe as the Soviet Union.

These disparities threaten stability by creating the temptation to use, or threaten to use, military force to influence political decisions. Our negotiating goal is to eliminate, reduce, or offset these large disparities by appropriately designed reductions. A program of reductions which would preserve these disparities would be to the disadvantage of the West. And, since this outcome would undermine rather than enhance stability, we believe it would be to the disadvantage of all sides.

Therefore, the specific and concrete program which the West has put forward attacks this disparities problem directly.

We have proposed the elimination of the imbalance in ground force manpower, so that the outcome would be equitable for both sides, in the form of manpower parity for East and West. To this end, the final goal of the negotiations would be a common ceiling for overall ground force manpower for both sides. This outcome would go directly to the potential source of conflict in the area, which is the imbalance of ground forces. And, since any conflict in this area would carry with it the risk of escalation to use of nuclear weapons, elimination of the ground force imbalance would reduce the risk of nuclear conflict as well.

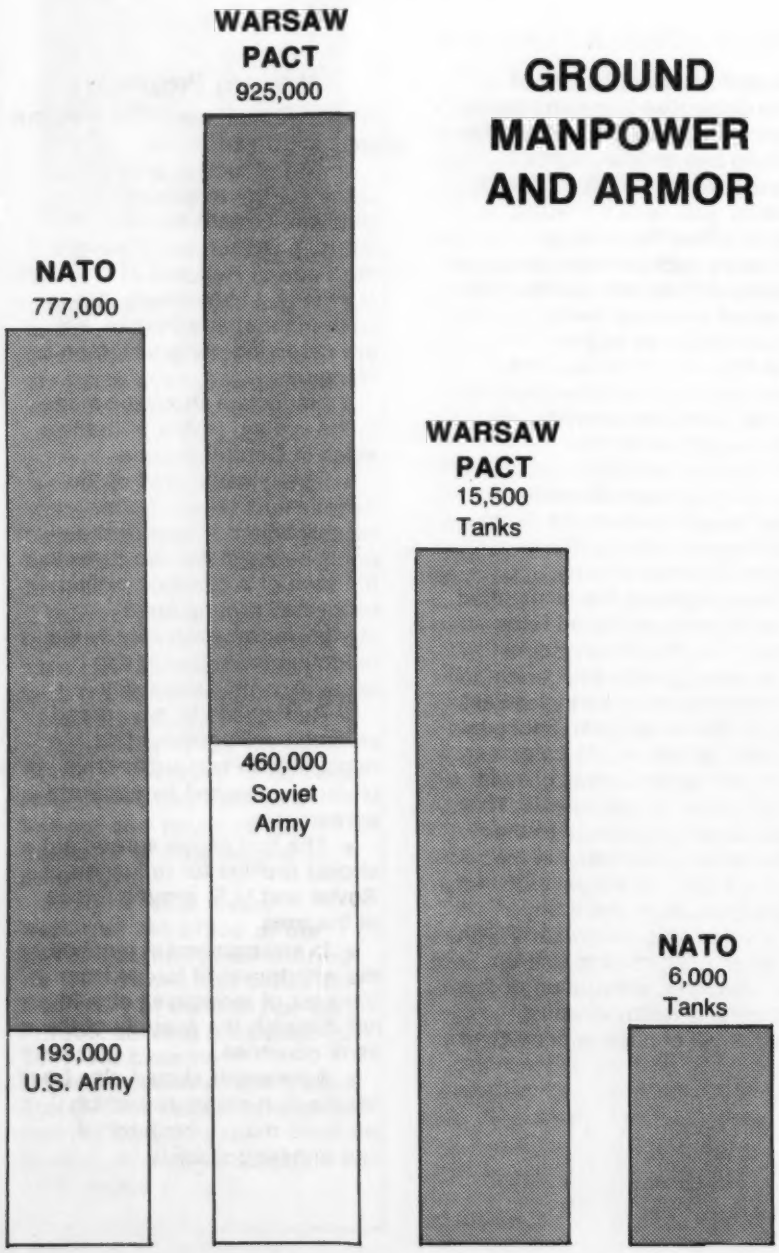

NMENT ORGANIZATION FOR MBFR
ND VIENNA, MBFR AS A TALE OF THREE CITIES
USSELS
The North Atlantic Council
Senior Political Committee
MBFR Working Group
VIENNA
MBFR Plenary Sessions
U.S. Delegation
NATO
Ad Hoc Group
Belgium, Canada, German Federal Republic, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway, Turkey, and United States
Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Poland, Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary

Western Proposal

The basic features of the Western proposal are as follows:

- The reduction area should comprise the territories of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Poland. We are reserving our position on Hungary.
- Reduction should be made in the ground forces of the two sides in Central Europe.
- The ultimate goal of the negotiations should be the establishment of approximate parity between the two sides in the form of a common ceiling for overall ground force manpower on each side in the reduction area, taking into account combat capability.
- Reductions to the agreed common ceiling should be negotiated in two successive phases, governed by separate agreements.
- The first phase agreement should provide for reduction of Soviet and U.S. ground forces in the area.
- In any agreement reached, the withdrawal of forces from the area of reductions should not diminish the security of the flank countries.
- Agreement should also be reached on measures which will build mutual confidence and enhance stability by

The NATO/WARSAW PACT BALANCE IN EUROPE



reducing fear of surprise attack and the risk of misunderstandings, provide for verification of agreements, and ensure that agreements are neither circumvented nor undermined.

- The first phase agreement should include agreement on the concept of a common ceiling for overall ground force manpower on each side in the reduction area. It should also include agreement on continuation of the negotiations in a second phase in which each side would agree further to reduce its ground forces in the reduction area in order to complete movement toward the agreed common ceiling.

We believe this is a reasonable and practical proposal.

We think it is practical because it does not attempt to tackle the whole potential range of the subject matter all at once. It focuses on U.S. and Soviet ground force reduction in the first phase.

We think it is a reasonable proposal because the outcome is an equitable one for both sides, and one which would enhance stability in the area. Under a common ceiling, both sides would have the same number of soldiers in the area.

Our proposal deals with the major disparities of manpower, tanks, and geography. The manpower disparity would disappear at a common ceiling on each side. The tank disparity would be considerably reduced. And the asymmetry of the

proposal regarding withdrawal of U.S. soldiers and disposition of U.S. equipment is justified by the geographic disparity.

We think, though, that by focusing on the desirability of obtaining a good outcome—that is, a more stable balance—we can bring the Soviets to see that our approach is fair and reasonable.

Soviet Attitudes

There is considerable evidence that the Soviets are serious in these negotiations:

- Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev is on public record as personally identified with and committed to the negotiations; Soviet negotiators make continual references to the 1975 timetable mentioned by Brezhnev.
- We had expected that in conformity with their behavior in the SALT and Berlin negotiations, the Soviet negotiators would delay for months before responding to our initiatives. Instead, the Soviets put down a specific proposal early in the negotiations.
- In the personal sense, the Soviet representatives give every appearance of strong

MUTUAL AND BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE A CHRONOLOGY

June 1968	North Atlantic Council meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, calls for "Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions".
December 1970	The United States informs the North Atlantic Council that it will not conduct unilateral reductions.
June 1970	Warsaw Pact indicates it would discuss mutual reductions only as part of a European Security Conference.
May 1971	Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev calls for force reductions in a speech at Tbilisi, Soviet Georgia.
January 1972	Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee, meeting in Prague, reaffirms its willingness to participate in separate force reductions.
May 1972	President Nixon in Moscow receives specific Soviet assurances of willingness to begin negotiations.
Fall 1972	West and East lay ground work for opening negotiations.
November 1972	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) opens in Helsinki.
January-June 1973	Multilateral preliminary talks establish the format for MBFR.
October 30, 1973	Formal negotiations open in Vienna, Austria.

Soviet FROG short-medium range missiles, top left, pass in review. A United States First Infantry Division tank at Mannheim, Federal Republic of Germany, during REFORGER 74 operations. At left is the Situation Room at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

personal interest in making progress. They have been non-polemical and businesslike.

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Conclusion

On the basis of the evidence we have mentioned, and of the assessment of most of our colleagues in Vienna, we believe the long-term prospects for the MBFR negotiations are positive. But to achieve the best possible outcome, patience and persistence will be required.

Here, I would like to highlight a point which was implicit in what I have already said. In this negotiation, we are striving not only to agree on a mutual reduction of forces. We also want an equilibrium of conventional forces in Central Europe. Such equilibrium would in turn decrease the risk of war in that area.

An equilibrium in conventional forces in Central Europe would greatly reduce the risk that the Soviets might attempt to use military force, or the threat of such force, to exert political pressure on a Western state.

Central Europe is now reasonably stable. But in the light of the fact that any armed conflict in Central Europe could escalate into a nuclear war, it is clear that every improvement in that stability is in the direct interest of the United States as well as of Europe.

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